

Street Trading Activities in Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown: present situation and future directions

Angelyn Tan 'G'-Ling¹, A Aminuddin^{2*}, Nila Inangda Daud³

^{1, 2 3}*Department of Architecture, Faculty of Built Environment, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*

* *asrulmahjuddin@um.edu.my*

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This research aims to understand the role of street trading activities in Chinatown and to promote its role in enhancing the livability of Kuala Lumpur in line with the government's efforts to establish cultural and ethnic enclaves in the city. The objectives of this research are to identify the present situation of street trading activities and to investigate the informal use of streets and outdoor spaces as the setting for these businesses. The two findings of the study are firstly, the identification of the profile of street trading activities which includes the activity type, demographic profile of the traders and background of the business establishments. Secondly is the behavioural pattern and usage of the informal spaces, including the location, premise type and changes of the streetscape according to time. The paper serves to provide further directions in terms of urban planning and further site intervention that would be able to prevent the further loss of identity and dilution of the Chinese heritage in Kuala Lumpur. Chinatown holds a dear presence in the lives of the people, and the preservations of these qualities only enhance the livability of Kuala Lumpur as a modern city.

Keywords: urban public spaces, ethnic enclave, cultural enclave, street life, Chinatown

1. INTRODUCTION

Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown is located at the oldest quarters of the capital city of Malaysia, and this is the original location where the pulsating heart of the city beats. From its arteries, streets and alleys carved their way organically into the tropical rainforest of mid-1800s Malaya to sustain the urbanisation projects driven by the fervor of Chinese tin mining industries. In present-day Kuala Lumpur, these early streets are important addresses for long-established offices and various home-grown businesses. It remains bustling for most parts of the day with pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Along the streets, informal public spaces such as the pavements and alleys are also a shared realm for the pedestrian pathway and the setting of street trading activities. This

constant interaction at the street level sustains the businesses. It encourages active street life, both of which have been the characteristics of the old city quarters since the day of its inception.

Unfortunately, Chinatown has struggled to maintain her appeal among the Chinese community after most of the original residents had gradually moved to neighbour satellite towns when the city grew increasingly congested and too expensive for most households to sustain. The formation of business districts and shops in the new neighbourhood offers easier alternatives for people to obtain their daily necessities and thus reducing the need for them to return to the city. As an effect, many businesses in the city centre struggled to thrive and had to cease operations. Filling this vacuum are businesses which targets

the tourist market while leveraging on the remaining memories associated with the place – the typical scenario that we see today. Unfortunately, most of the new businesses have little or no connection to the Chinese settlement the place is named after. Both the changes in customer demographics, as well as the increasing dependence on ‘new’ migrant workers from countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar who have now taken over as the faces of Chinatown traders, have altered the image, expectation and cultural ecosystem of Chinatown.

However, the further loss of identity and cultural heritage either in Chinatown or in other ethnic enclaves of multi-ethnic Kuala Lumpur can now be mitigated through the introduction of good city planning practices by the government. The vibrancy and diversification of settlements, building typologies and distinct cultural enclaves have all been recognized as essential genetic components of the country’s capital and now becomes important considerations for any urban intervention projects.

This paper seeks to report the current profile and operations of the street trading activities in Chinatown in order to understand the present situation at site and aid the government in protecting the ethnic and cultural enclaves in the city. Based on the findings of this study, any further urban intervention projects on-site would be made based on informed decisions and recommendations that would safeguard both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the Chinese community in Kuala Lumpur.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Street Life in South East Asia

Appleyard (1981) described the usage of the streets, especially in a developing country as being more complex than their counterparts in a developed nation. This is because the streets in a developing country are being used as not only for the mode of transport but also for mix usage. Lynch (1960) states that the roles that the street plays in a city constructs the identity of the city and the distinct character develops the sense of place attachment for the city dwellers.

The use of streets and other public space in Southeast Asia was described by Douglass & Deniere (2000) as being informal, spontaneous and temporal in nature and therefore the dynamics

of its organizations were perceived to be much more intensive in use and is comparatively much different than the behaviours of the street life in the Western perspective. Apart from the primary purpose of streets as the commuting route, the streets in Southeast Asia as a lively public realm for different activities to take place such as that of trading activities on either a structured or transient basis, a gathering space for informal meetings and also sometimes used as an informal living and dining space (Oranratmanee, 2012).

In addition to all the descriptions which perfectly illustrates the street usage and street life in the context of the case study area, the five-foot ways also play a significant role in the street experience at the site. The five footway, as the name suggests, is a five-foot-wide veranda on the ground floor of the shophouses typically found in Malaysia and Singapore. This space serves as a practical solution to address the hot and humid weathers in this region as it provides a sheltered front arcade to the ground floor shop fronts and also serves as a pedestrian pathway away from the main road (Chen, 1998). Shuhana (2011) described the five-foot way as being one of the most unique walkways for activity settings that blends between the public, and private spaces take place. The shopkeepers often use this walkway as a spillover space for the display of their merchandise while the customers were able to spend a longer time browsing the items away from the sun.

2.2 Urban Livability in Kuala Lumpur

Southworth (2016) observes that urban growth worldwide has strained the quality of life for the city dwellers on many levels. According to him, the liveability of a city is dependent on the walkability of the streets, the sociability of public spaces, accessibility to recreational and natural settings, pleasant and easy journey to work, high standards of health and safety and the protection from unwanted urban noise.

In 2016, The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) listed Malaysia as the second most highly urbanized country in ASEAN. It was projected that by 2030, the rural to urban migration trend would see some 9.7 million people or one-third of the country’s population residing in Kuala Lumpur alone (The Malay Mail, 6th October 2016). With the upward trend of population growth, the liveability and sustainability of the urban environment becomes important factors to

ensure the overall well-being and quality of life for city dwellers. Apart from approaching better city living through the use of less energy, natural resources or by promoting the innovation of efficient systems, livable urban environments should also look at the safeguarding of the intangible aspects of the city dynamics such as the sense of belonging, security, safety, freedom of cultural expressions through the approach of urban design.

Bin Ji (as cited in Shamsuddin & Abu Hassan, 2013) also concurs that liveability represents the ability of a city to maintain and achieve the quality of life that is desirable based on the perception and experience of the community. Therefore, a liveable city is attained when the overall well-being of the community is met not only from the physical aspects of its infrastructural development and economic stability but with security and freedom to express cultural, social and religious believes. The study among Kuala Lumpur's urban population in 2013 recommends that improvement to the urban design qualities will not only strengthen the people's sense of place and belonging but in the long attracts foreign investment and ensuring the

steady economic growth of the country.

The Kuala Lumpur City Hall (2004) projects the liveable Kuala Lumpur City as one that not only addresses the functional and aesthetic aspects of the city's built environment but also being able to foster a sense of identity and establish a highly imageable city form. A visually pleasing, sustainable, comfortable, safe and economically stable city conveys a sense of place and belonging that is enjoyed both by the residents and visitors alike. In Kuala Lumpur, the urban design considerations and guidelines give emphasis on the multi-ethnic and cultural compositions of the people in order to form the distinctive and unique character of the city, fostering a sense of community, social harmony and place attachment. A liveable city is also expected to attract global high skilled talents to Malaysia and form a creative knowledge workforce that would make Malaysia a high-income nation (Tenth Malaysia Plan 2011-2015, 2010). The following timeline in Figure 1 illustrates the policies and plans put in place by the Malaysian Government since 2004 for Kuala Lumpur to achieve a Livable City status.

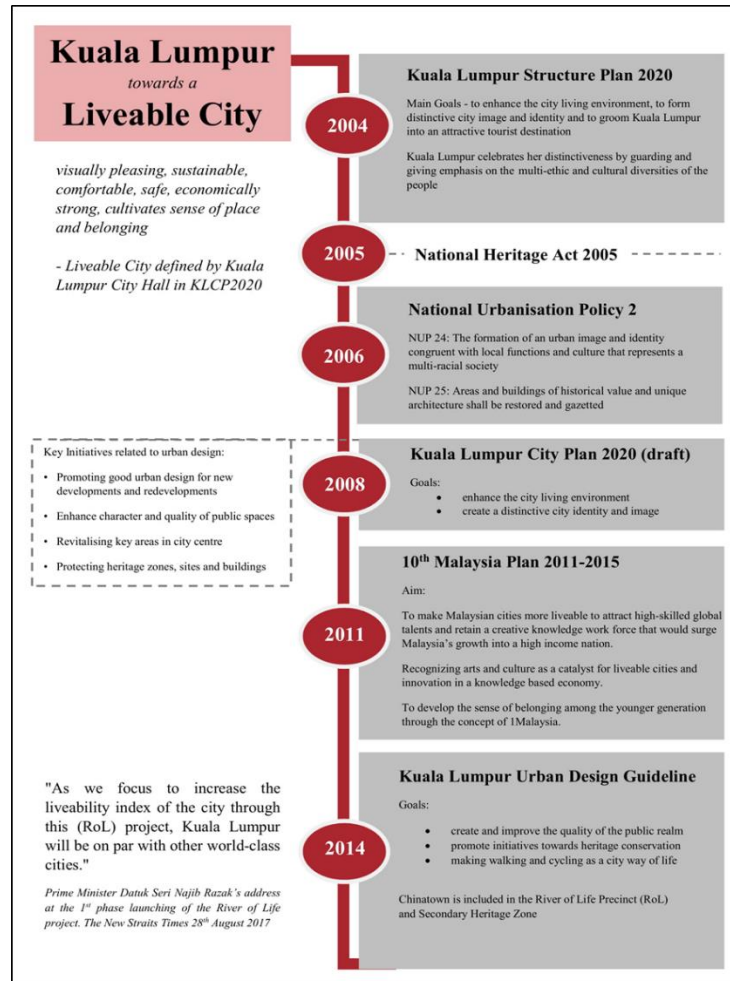


Figure 1: The timeline of policies and plans put in place by the Malaysian Government for Kuala Lumpur to achieve a Livable City status.

2.3 Cultural and Ethnic Enclaves

In the Malaysian context, cultural and ethnic enclaves represent the physical environment where simple lifestyle, customs and practices of a particular community is freely demonstrated among the broader spectrum of multi-ethnic diversities. Such practices, either religious, cultural or routine daily rituals, can take place both within the confines of the private environment or in the public domain such as on the streets. These practices help the initial migrant communities forge a sense of belonging in their foreign settlements and over time, developing a new genius loci for the place. A three-prong feature that can establish a sense of place and belonging among the migrant communities in a foreign land are the built environment, social activities and communal rituals (Bakri, Zaman, Kamarudin, Dom, & Alias, 2014).

According to Alexander et al. (1977) in *The Pattern Language*, a good city is one that is built of a 'Mosaic of Subcultures' as different communities have varied needs, rituals, interests and preferred living environments. In today's modern cities, heterogeneous multi-ethnic communities often become faceless and uninteresting as they are no longer distinguishable one from the other. In Malaysia, for example, living in new housing schemes encourages the integration of different communities, but this also means that communities now become a large faceless group of people. Therefore, ethnic and cultural enclaves in the city can encourage subcultures to be concentrated and thus forging stronger cultural identities as people tend to cling to familiar values, needs and perspectives. According to the author, the concentration in terms of place not only allows the subculture to thrive, but it will not dilute other neighbouring subcultures.

2.4 The Concept of Chinatown

According to Chinese scholars like Li (1988), Chinatown can be described as a 'special type of Chinese neighbourhood' while Benton and Pieke (1998) believes that Chinatown is not necessary the place where the Chinese live but rather one that can thrive as a Chinese commercial and symbolic center. Lin (1998) describes Chinatown today as not only a place that serves the household needs of the local community but that of the tourist who expects that the "creative and culinary activities of ethnic insiders not just as functional, cultural practices internal to the enclave but the performative repertoire of the cultural display to serve the consumptive and spectating demands of the outsider audience".

Based on the survey conducted by Wong and Tan (2013), it was discovered that in Southeast Asia, the term 'Chinatown' has never been used by the local community or historically referenced to such Chinese settlements especially in countries like Malaysia and Singapore where the Chinese are not concentrated on a specific location but can be found across the country.

It is only until much recently that such labels were informally given to the 'Chinese settlements' mainly with the intention to leverage on tourism from the Western segment familiar with the concept of 'Chinatown' and the larger segment of the strong Chinese market. Chinese tourist arrivals are motivated by their need to find a sense of familiarity in a foreign land and to feed their curiosity on the lives of the overseas Chinese and their descendants. Their demand for such 'touristic presentation' expected of Chinatown has encouraged governments and tourism bodies to invest in the development of such tourist destinations and as a way for international communities to relate to China's rising economic stature.

2.5 Ethnic Enclaves and the Tourism Economy

From the perspective of the tourism economy, Khan (2015) explains that ethnic enclaves are greatly appealing as it provides a vantage point into the "authentic homeland culture" of a particular community in a foreign land and offers a multi-faceted perspective into the lives of different communities at a single destination. One of the aims of the Kuala Lumpur

Tourism Master Plan 2015-2025 is to provide the visitors with a distinct multi-cultural experience of Malaysia by focusing on the development of cultural heritage and places of interest in and around Kuala Lumpur. This is to be achieved through the revitalisation of the city's ethnic and cultural enclaves, restoration and preservation of heritage buildings and turning Malaysia into cuisine heaven (Kuala Lumpur City Hall, 2015).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research approach from the study conducted by Pillai (2013) on the Campbell Street Market in Georgetown, Penang is selected due to the similarity in the nature of business activities, usage of space and the relatively similar operations of street trading activities within the context of Malaysian old town centers. The cultural mapping exercise was conducted through the field study method where both the tangible and intangible assets of the site were recorded in a guided survey process and their locations mapped over the physical location on site.

Based on the literature review, the best way to approach this research is quantitatively through the case study methodology particularly using the field study method. The main instrument for data collection is through a questionnaire survey form which will be distributed to all respondents on site who are involved in the street trading activities. The survey form, which will be facilitated by enumerators, would also record the location of the business premise and therefore acts to map the street trading activities over the case study area.

A thorough collection of data from that of a census is necessary for this study to observe the population size, distribution and behavioural patterns of the street activities from the case study area. Therefore, this study considers all the street trading activities within the parameters of the case study area. The research strategy was approached in two phases, namely Phase 1: Preliminary Site Investigation (Rapid Assessment) and followed by Phase 2: Questionnaire Survey. In both phases, the field study method was used.

In Phase 1 of this study, a preliminary site investigation was first conducted for the researcher to gauge the context of the case study area. The observations from this phase were adopted to formulate the design of the research approach, a sequence of the survey, and identify the criteria for the selection of the researcher for

the questionnaire survey process which takes place in Phase 2.

The data collected from the survey are from the street traders' feedback regarding the operations of their businesses as well as on-site observations of the researcher. The data is then tabulated and analyzed in IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21 and Microsoft Excel 2013. The analysis was done using descriptive statistics and reported in frequencies and percentages. Cross tabulation was also used to analyze the findings based on activity type and nationality of respondents.

3.1 The Case Study Area

The case study encompasses an area of 12.79 hectares. Bordering from the north is Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock to the end of Jalan Petaling in the south, Jalan Sultan borders from the east to the Sungai Klang bordering to the west. Lining the narrow two-lane streets are rows of pre-war shophouses and newer buildings built over the previous shophouse lots. There are many pocket spaces and alleys both at the back and the sides of the building blocks which are occupied by street

trading activities and used for pedestrian walkways.

Petaling Street or Jalan Petaling is the oldest traditional street in Kuala Lumpur which cuts across the case study area and intersecting with Jalan Hang Lekir. The two streets are generally now referred to as 'Chinatown' and are the location of the Street Market where the highest concentration of street trading activities can be found. The other streets and alleys surrounding the Street Market act as 'spillover spaces' from the Chinatown as they are physically accessible to Jalan Petaling and Jalan Hang Lekir. For that reason, the focus of the study is targeted mainly on these locations in order to understand the relationship of the street trading activities to the spatial qualities of Chinatown.

Nevertheless, the study also looked at all other streets, alleys and pocket spaces within the boundaries of the case study area and have recorded that street trading activities are found on 14 different locations. The actual coverage area can be seen in Figure 2.

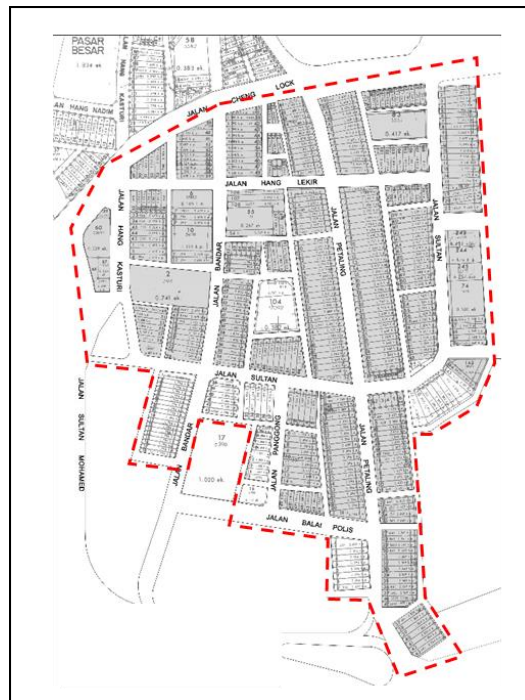


Figure 2: The Case Study Area

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Current Profile of Street Trading Activities

4.1.1 Activity Type

There are a total of 547 street trading activities taking place in the case study area. From this total number, 514 businesses are concentrated on six streets and alleys at the Street Market – Jalan Petaling (338), Jalan Hang Lekir (76), Jalan Sultan (46), Lorong Petaling (17) and the wet markets on Penjaja Gallery Jalan Tun H.S.Lee (26) and Lorong Bandar 22 (11). In general, street trading activities are divided into three different categories – retail (419), food and beverage (120) and other activity types (8). At the Street Market, the number of stalls representing the five most frequent merchandise on retail are bags (86),

clothing items (78), footwear (35), watch (34) and eyewear (22).

Two of every five stalls here would include a stall selling bags and another selling a type of clothing item. Almost 80% of items on sale at the Street Market are mass-produced and counterfeit copies of luxury goods which unfortunately are not able to represent the original Chinese heritage of the shopping street. There are 102 F&B related businesses herewith, 46% (47) providing public dining facilities and the remaining 54% (55) sold light refreshments that can be consumed on the go. The number of street businesses offering service-based activities and street artists is indeed very insignificant.

The list of all businesses and items on sale here are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: List of Items on Sale in Chinatown Kuala Lumpur

All Items on Sale in Chinatown Kuala Lumpur							
(Jalan Petaling, Jalan Hang Lekir, Jalan Sultan, Lorong Petaling, Lorong Bandar 22 & Penjaja Gallery Jalan Tun HS Lee)							
No	Retail- Goods & Merchandise	Fre- quency	No	Food & Beverage	Fre- quency	No	Others
1	Bags (Handbags, luggage, various types)	86	1	Noodle Dish** (Yong Tau Fu, Fishball, Beef, Laksa, Wantan, Hakka, Lo Su Fan, Pan Mee)	18	1	Food Preparation
2	Clothing Items (Shirt, Dress, Shorts, Pants, T-shirt, Singlet)	78	2	Cut Fruits, Drinks and Jelly	11	2	Locksmith
3	Footwear (Shoes, Sandals, Slippers, Socks, Stoking)	35	3	Drinks (Soya Milk, Logan, Sugarcane, Herbal Tea)	12	3	Pedicure and Medicure
4	Watch	34	4	Bak Kut The** (Herbal Pork Broth)	6	4	Street musician
5	Eyewear (Spectacles and Sunglasses)	22	5	Bread and Cakes	4	5	Street Artist
6	Souvenir (Keychain, Trinket)	15	6	Roasted Duck	4	6	Tattoo Parlour
7	Wallet	15	7	Ba Gua (Pork Jerky)	3	7	Watch Repair
8	Fashion Accessories (Necklace, Bracelet, Cufflinks, Silver)	13	8	Chinese Dim Sum and Pau**	4		Total
9	Phone Accessories (Phone Casing)	13	9	Kuih (Various Types)	3		8
10	Belt	12	10	Mamak**	3		
11	Toys	12	11	Rice Porridge**	3		
12	Electronic gadgets (Powerbank, various gadget)	11	12	Cendol	2		
13	Perfume	10	13	Medicine, Peanuts and Pickles	2		
14	Vegetables and Fruits	7	14	Dai Chao** (Chinese Dishes)	2		
15	Florist (Fresh cut flowers, bouquet, wreath)	6	15	Nasi Lemak**	2		
16	Pork	5	16	Roasted Pork	2		
17	Cap	4	17	Unknown F&B	2		
18	Fish and Seafood	4	18	Chang (Rice Dumpling)	1		
19	Grocery (various dried food stuff)	3	19	Chee Cheong Fan** (Rice Noodle Rolls)	1		
20	Unknown Retail	3	20	Chestnut	1		
21	Lighter	2	21	Fruit Rojak	1		
22	Newspaper and Magazine	2	22	Apam Balik	1		
23	Poultry (Chicken, Duck)	2	23	Ice-cream	1		
24	Durian	2	24	Indian Food**	1		
25	Antique and Buddha Statue	1	25	Indian Muruku	1		
26	Cell Phone	1	26	Lok Lok** (Skewers Hot Pot)	1		
27	Disc	1	27	Malay Breakfast**	1		
28	Padlock	1	28	Malay Food**	1		
29	Pens	1	29	Mua Chi (Glutinous Rice Cakes)	1		
30	Taoist Prayer Items	1	30	Popiah and Lobak** (Springrolls and beancurd rolls)	1		
31	Beancurd (Tau Fu)	1	31	Portuguese Grill Fish**	1		
32	Health Product	1	32	Ru Rou Fan** (Braised Meat Rice)	1		
	Total	404	33	Sa Kee Ma (Caramelised Rice Puff)	1		
			34	Satay**	1		
			35	Xu cha and Lou Shui	1		
			36	You Tiao (Cakoi or Chinese Oil Sticks)	1		
			Total	102			

Note : ** indicates the provision of dining areas at the vicinity

4.1.2 Customer Behaviour

Three general groups of customers were identified – local regular customers, local non regular customers and international tourists. The finding points out that regular local customer tends to purchase fresh produce from the wet market, prayer items and patronise the street food hawkers. Local non-regular customers only spent

on light refreshments from the food stands suggesting that their visit to Chinatown was mainly for sightseeing. International tourists constantly shopped at the Street Market but avoided consuming any local street food. The list in Figure 3 details the customer patronage for each of the customer groups.

Regular Customers (Domestic)	Non Regular Customers (Domestic)	Non Regular Customers (International)
<p><u>Retail- Goods & Merchandise</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetables(6) • Florist(6) • Fish and Seafood(4) • Pork(4) • Durian(2) • Lighter(1) • Poultry(1) • Taoist Prayer Items(1) • Tau Fu(1) <p><u>Food & Beverage</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noodle Dish(12) • Drinks(6) • Kuih (Traditional Cakes)(3) • Mamak(3) • Bread and Cakes(2) • Roasted Duck(2) • Malay Food(2) • Chee Cheong Fan (Rice Noodle Rolls)(2) • Roasted Pork(2) • Cendol(1) • Dessert(1) • Herbal Tea(1) • Laksa(1) • Medicine, Peanuts and Pickles(1) • Satay(1) • You Tiao (Cakoi or Chinese Oil Sticks)(1) <p><u>Others</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cobbler(1) 	<p><u>Food & Beverage</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut Fruits(7) • Indian Muruku(1) <p>Souvenir</p>  <p>T-Shirt</p>  <p>Curry Laksa</p>  <p>Ba Gua</p>  <p>Apam Balik</p> 	<p><u>Retail- Goods & Merchandise</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bag(60) • Clothing Items(51) • Watch(24) • Footwear (Shoes)(22) • Eyewear & others(16) • Wallet(12) • Electronic gadgets(9) • Fashion Accessories(8) • Phone Accessories(8) • Souvenir(7) • Toys(7) • Belt(7) • Perfume(2) • Perfume and Bag(1) • Padlock(1) • Pens(1) <p><u>Food & Beverage</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ba Gua (Pork Jerky)(3) • Malay Mixed Rice(1) <p><u>Others</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street musician(1) • Street Artist(1) <p>Perfume</p>  <p>Watch</p> 

Figure 3: Customer Patronage Concentration

4.2 Demographic Profile of Street Traders

Among the businesses surveyed, 170 (31.1%) were managed personally by their business owners, of which 164 were Malaysians, and 6 were Non-Malaysians. The remaining 231 (42.2%) were led by employees where 49 were Malaysians, and 181 were Non-Malaysians. The operations of the remaining 213 businesses were unidentified. The following findings are based on the respondents who were directly involved in the daily operations of the street trading activities at the site.

4.2.1 Gender

In terms of gender, 335 (61.24%) respondents were male and 102 (18.6%) female while 110 (20.16%) data were unable to be obtained. The available finding shows that there are three times as many males to female traders. Therefore it is clear that the street trading activities in Chinatown were mostly male-dominated.

4.2.2 Age

The most significant majority of traders were below the ages of 44 years, with a substantial majority being non-Malaysian male. Both the male and female Malaysians, on the other hand, were represented across all age groups but are more prominent in the age groups above 45 years.

4.2.3 Nationality and Ethnicity

From a total of 547 street traders, the Malaysians (229; 42%) made up the majority of those surveyed while Non-Malaysians consists of (188; 34%) of the respondents. Unfortunately, (130; 24%) persons were unwilling to disclose their nationality and thus creates an ambiguity in the actual representation of data. Among the Malaysian respondents, the Chinese made up the largest ethnic group (179; 78.51%), followed by the Malays (26; 11.4%), Indians (20; 8.77%) and other ethnicities (4; 1.75%).

The two largest known groups of migrants are the Bangladeshis (75; 39.9%), Myanmarers (43; 22.9%) and a total of (14; 7.4%) respondents from six other countries which are Nepal (5), India (3), Indonesia (2), Thailand (2), Vietnam (1) and Afghanistan (1). However, (56; 29.8%) in this

group chooses do not disclose their country of origin.

4.3 Background of Business

4.3.1 Ownership

The study shows 434 (79%) businesses are established by sole individuals who are also the current owner, 25 (5%) are partnerships, 81 (15%) businesses were inherited from a previous owner and seven others are unknown. Among the 81 businesses which have been inherited from a previous owner, 71 were passed down as family legacies while ten are from former employers. At the time the study was conducted, as many as 15% of all street trading activities in Chinatown has transcended the extent of one generation of trader.

4.3.2 Age of Business Establishment

The age of business establishments for 173 known business ranges from less than a year to 87 years. The breakdown of a business establishment according to age groups are more than 50 years; 16 businesses, 40 to 50 years; 11 businesses, 30 to 40 years; 26 businesses, 20 to 30 years; 31 businesses, 10 to 20 years; 56 businesses, 5 to 10 years; 8 businesses and below five years; 25 businesses.

The wide variation in the age of the business establishments demonstrated that some long-running businesses were still relevant in the 21st century while new businesses continued to spring forth to replace and share the traditional market space in downtown Kuala Lumpur.

4.3.3 Business Legacy

Among the older businesses which are above 50 years, 14 are found at the Street Market and 13 of which are from the F&B category. It is interesting to observe that most of the long-running street trading activities and remain as family businesses are those that are involved in the F&B category. The declining number of older businesses that are above 40 years seems to suggest that many older businesses have ceased to be in operations beyond the first generation of business owners. When long-running businesses cease to operate the intangible heritage values and the identity of Chinatown will be significantly

affected and detrimental to the identity of the overall history of the city of Kuala Lumpur.

The study also discovered that 61% of the respondents claimed that they are uncertain of the future of their businesses once they are unable to continue the operations themselves. However, 26% of family-run businesses believed that the business legacy would remain within the family, and 13% of business owners look forward to passing the operations on to their partners or apprentice.

4.4 The Usage of Public Space for Street Trading Activities

4.4.1 The Setting for Street Trading Activities

In Chinatown, street trading activities take place in four different 'settings' which are pavement, main street, back alleys and five footway. At the Street Market, street trading activities are mainly found on the sidewalks and main streets. The general breakdown of premises found on each set are pavement; 243 (44%), main street; 200 (37%), back alley; 70(13%) and five footway; 34(6%). Retail type activities are mainly located on the pavement and main street, while 60% of all street trading activities found in the back alleys are related to F&B.

4.4.2 Type of Business Premise

Non-permanent structures like makeshift stalls or pushcarts represent 76% of all the business premises in Chinatown. Only 23% of the premises are more permanent with structures that are fixed in place as extensions from existing buildings or stalls which are built on-site.

4.4.3 Changing Patterns of Street Use

The business operation hours for street trading activities can start as early as 7 am in the morning and carries on until 11 pm daily. The number of businesses at the Street Market ranges between 149 to 161 in the daytime and 248 at night as the 5 pm to 7 pm timeframe being the most exciting period where most of the movement happens.

The most interesting characteristic of the Street Market is the transient nature of the

business premises where the street trading activities appears, disappears and re-groups depending on their business hours. The difference in the number of businesses between day and night changes the shopping experience, density of the Street Market and the overall experience of the Chinatown street life.

5. CONCLUSION

The present situation in Chinatown shows that the act of buying and selling, dining on the street as well as other pedestrian interactions on the city streets takes place fluidly and organically through the presence of street trading activities. The robust street life, constant pedestrian traffic, and informal use of public spaces and transient nature of business activities all add up to the unique image of Chinatown today.

Moving forward, sensitive urban interventions that promote the safeguarding of tangible and intangible aspects of this ethnic enclave should be made a priority. This can be achieved when control over the types of businesses are exercised able to reinstate the identity of the ethnic enclave. Apart from this, improving the layout, design, maintenance, and overall use of streets are also ways to enhance the livability of the city through the presence of ethnic enclaves.

As a result of this study, it is hoped that the older quarters of Kuala Lumpur will continue to be celebrated and recognized as important nodes of activities where every city dweller can find a sense of belonging and experience the multi-ethnic facades of the city.

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